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SUBDUING THE LAST ENEMY

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of The
Episcopal Theological School

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Divinity

by

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April 1966

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Meaning	1
The Problem	1
The Difficulties	2
The Sources	6
The Procedure	7
II. LIFE EXPERIENCE AS DEATH	9
Introduction	9
Birth and Death	9
Separation	13
Loneliness	16
Work	19
Marriage	20
Summary	23
III. THE DYING	24
Introduction	24
Death	25
Truth	27
Middle Knowledge	30
Communication and Companionship	33
Summary	35
IV. OBSERVERS	37
Introduction	37
Doctors	37
Nurses	41

CHAPTER	PAGE
Clergymen	42
Summary	48
V. DEATH: BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL	50
Introduction	50
Old Testament	50
New Testament	55
Theology of Death	61
Summary	68
VI. CONCLUSION	70
BIBLIOGRAPHY	76

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Meaning

This study will undertake the job of establishing the point that, in fact, death is not the end of life. Death is part of life and comes under the heading of the all-inclusive term, Life.

The Problem

We human beings, from the beginning of our existence, have been taught that life is the important thing, and that death is the end, the non-being of our existence. Life is indeed very short. And we ask ourselves continually, when life has ended in death, is this, in reality, the end? As we know, there has been no other element in our life which is continually apparent than our knowledge that one day we must die (whatever that means!)

Whole civilizations have been built in death's dominion. The Egyptians turned their land into a vast necropolis, and the Aztecs conquered Mexico not for booty but for human sacrifices to blunt the lethal appetites of their man-eating gods. Trying to cope with the dreadful and perplexing fact of death, man has erected great intellectual deifices; philosophers as far apart as Socrates and (2300 years after him) Karl Jaspers have held that the essence of philosophy is preparation for death. Others have sought to exorcise death with magic. Or with reason. "When I am, death is not," said Epicurus. "When death is, I am not. Therefore we can never have anything to do with death." The vanquishing of death was Christianity's great enterprise.

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" cried the apostle Paul.¹

For most people on earth today, death signifies in one form or fashion, the end of all things. There are a few who have (by way of theology, philosophy or some other intellectual pursuit) transcended this part of life. These people may convince those individuals with little curiosity that they have overcome the fear of death. But, what about that time when the individual is confronted with the actual fact of his own death?

There is, sometimes, a problem in this facing of the actual death. This study will look at these problems as well as point to some meaning in this experience.

The Difficulties

This section has been divided into four parts in order to deal with the difficulties in writing on the subject of death as a part of life. There are noticeable difficulties in doing work in the area of death simply because one is discouraged by what has been written up to this time. The different professions handle death in their own particular way, with their own particular slant. In each case there are obvious inadequacies.

In the field of medicine, the doctors who come in contact with death more than any other group of people exhibit their

¹"On Death as a Constant Companion," Time, vol. 86, no. 20, (November 12, 1965), p. 52.

unique way of handling the death experience by looking upon death in terms of biology, chemistry, and physics. They see death as a bio-chemical reaction within the human body. By looking at death in terms of bio-chemical statistics, the doctor has been freed from the interpersonal encounter with death and the interpersonal encounter of the person who has just "expired." The medical profession (general practitioners and surgeons) avoid coming face to face with dying and death in their own personal lives by setting up a mechanical system of treating such cases. This particular system of a mechanical procedure comes out quite clearly when one observes the ritual which takes place in a hospital room.

There is another group of doctors who deal with death, but not so closely as the general practitioners and surgeons. These doctors are the psychiatrists and psychologists. The psychiatrists and psychologists encounter death primarily through another person who has had the experience. And this group of doctors works with death in a much more indirect way than the previous group. Their language, approach, and direction are primarily in terms of the other person's anxieties, fears, and hostilities.

The next professional group under consideration is the religious or ministerial set. This group includes the parish clergy, religious leaders, and religious educators. It is not surprising that clergymen have almost as much experience with death and the dying person as the doctors do. It is a well known fact that in a dying situation or a death situation,

the clergyman is alerted almost immediately. Therefore, we can conclude that the clergy is looked to for immediate help in such critical situations. And in these situations, it is often the case that what does come forth from the clergyman is nothing more than theological jargon. Also, the religious writers and commentators hide behind the "power of positive thinking" approach: "everything will be o.k.", "God will take care of you, so don't worry about this terrible thought of death", and "Let's have a little prayer" attitudes. Like the last group, the men of religion make up theologies and theories apart from death and avoid saying anything very definite about death itself. This is a result of their own fear of death, and not knowing anything to say about death. Therefore, the clergy have their own way of avoiding this part of life through the defenses of theology.

When speaking about death it is very refreshing to look to the field of literature where we often come closest to the reality of death because many authors are unhampered by conventional defenses of insecurity. When death is reported in a novel or story, there is this different, fresh outlook and approach to the experience of death. This profession must always be consulted and taken seriously because of its willingness to be open, straight-forward, and blunt on the subject of death.

One of the most difficult problems arising out of the professions mentioned (doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists,

and clergy) is the lack of corporation among themselves. In fact, because of the neglect of the others' contributions to the area of death, the picture becomes out of balance. This problem arises out of pride within the profession and a strong sense of insecurity within each man. There are notable exceptions to this statement which almost restore one's faith in the healing ministry. There have been joint books by doctors and clergymen, psychiatrists and clergymen, and other combinations of different professions (Menninger and Hiltner, Creative Aspects of Anxiety²; and Cabot and Dicks, The Art of Ministering to the Sick³). There is also a greater corporation between the professions in the actual treatment of the dying. In several communities, the doctors (surgeons and psychiatrists) and the clergymen are considered a part of the total healing team.

The last difficulty which arises in writing this thesis is the problem of narrowing down the subject to the point where it can be covered adequately and constructively. When speaking of the meaning of death as part of life, where will we begin? What are the sources going to be, what is to be the emphasis, and what direction will the thesis take? These problems must be considered in this study.

²Seward Hiltner and Karl Menninger, Constructive Aspects of Anxiety (New York, Abingdon Press, 1963).

³Richard C. Cabot and Russell L. Dicks, The Art of Ministering to the Sick (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1936).

The Sources

The thesis uses a variety of literature in its study of dying and death as part of life.

A major part of the basic orientation depends on two books of recent date: The Meaning of Death, Feifel (ed.)⁴ and Counseling the Dying, Bowers (ed.), et al.⁵

The clinical material used here depends a great deal on the works of Hackett and Weisman.⁶ And much of the pastoral material having to do with the clinical setting comes from Buxbaum.⁷ Other sources from the medical field include interviews with doctors and nurses concerning their work with death: how they handle this professionally and personally.

The Biblical-theological section is based on the works of several books dealing with exegesis (Rhys⁸, Cullmann⁹,

⁴Herman Feifel (ed.), The Meaning of Death (New York, McGraw-Hill Company, Inc., 1959).

⁵Margaretta K. Bowers, et al., Counseling the Dying, (New York, Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1964).

⁶Thomas P. Hackett and Avery D. Weisman, "The Treatment of the Dying," Current Psychiatric Therapies, Vol. II, 1962.

⁷Robert E. Buxbaum, "The Protestant Ministry to the Dying," (Paper presented at the Presbytery of Alamo, San Antonio, Texas, 1963).

⁸Howard Rhys, The Epistle to the Romans, (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1961).

⁹Oscar Cullmann, Immortality of the Soul or the Resurrection of the Dead? (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1964).

¹⁰ Stendahl¹¹, ¹¹ Dodd¹², and ¹² Williams¹³). And much of the understanding of the nature of man comes from Reinhold Niebuhr.

Some of the sources listed in the bibliography may not be quoted directly, but many of the books listed have been more of an inspiration and motivation, and have pin-pointed the direction of the thesis.

The Procedure

The thesis will examine the various factors that have a bearing on dying and death. The first task of the thesis is to develop a section on life experience where we encounter both a foretaste of death and actual death. This will be used to show that while giving us a foretaste of death and even an experience of death, we do go beyond life experience.

The next section will be an analysis of the dying person. This analysis will use the basic insights already developed

¹⁰ Krister Stendahl (ed.), Immortality and Resurrection, (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1965)

¹¹ C.H. Dodd, The Epistle to the Romans, (London, Fontant Books, 1959).

¹² C.S.C. Williams, "I and II Corinthians," Peake's Commentary on the Bible, Matthew Black, and H.H. Rowley, editors, (New York, Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd. 1962), pp. 954-972.

¹³ Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, vol. I, (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964).

in the previous chapter, with the addition of a number of clinical insights, inserted to complete the picture. The next chapter will necessarily have to be devoted to the other people who are around the dying person (Observers of Death). In this chapter, there will be a treatment of the different problems arising from death.

Following the three sections on death within persons' lives, the final chapter (before the Conclusion) will attempt to draw all of these together within the scope of the Biblical-theological discipline. This chapter will do nothing more than provide Biblical and theological references to what has been said in the three previous chapters. This chapter is valuable in that death and dying take on a different insight, while the fear of death becomes that which is the worst enemy, the last enemy of God.

The basic criterion for inclusion of material in this thesis is its contribution to a broader understanding of the problem and its awareness of that part of life called death. The thesis will not be a summary of all available literature and ideas on this subject, but it will try to point to some new pertinent insights on the subject. The study will conclude with an attempt to arrive at some better understanding of our concept of death and how this is related to life. The thesis will demonstrate in a subtle way the need to look more closely at some of our understanding of death and some of our understanding and insights into life. And out of this analysis of the topic of death, there will be a clearer and more sensitive understanding of death.

CHAPTER II

LIFE EXPERIENCE AS DEATH

Introduction

This chapter is an examination of selected life experiences in which there is a foretaste of death and dying itself. Each day of our life we are confronted with "little deaths." This chapter deals with these experiences, the encounters with these "little deaths", and also the chapter will show how these death experiences point to an affirmation of life as one goes through dying and death.

The first section of Chapter Two will be a discussion of Birth and Death in philosophical and theological terms. This section is not an attempt to define life as it is seen in these two parts of life, but this is an attempt to produce a working definition for the chapter. The experiences which are used to illustrate death in everyday life are the following: separation, loneliness, work, and marriage. In each of the last three experiences, separation will play a key part.

The last section of the chapter is a summary of what these experiences say about death and life.

Birth and Death

If looked upon as a physical process, life is that property which makes it possible for man to take in food,

make energy from it, grow, adapt himself to his environment, and reproduce his own kind. In this physical, bio-chemical process, life begins at birth, growth and adaptation occur, and finally death, the end of life, occurs. One must go beyond this definition to know life's meaning in its totality. The idealistic view (found in the Ancient Greeks and in our modern age) goes far beyond the physical process just described. Life is based on what an individual or group makes of its facilities.

The Bible looks at life by way of a relationship between man and God, the Creator. Within man himself, the Bible teaches the oneness of man's life yet differentiates its functions according to the goals served. Life is not divided into the physical and spiritual, but emphasizes the two as working together in life. Life has a common origin in all human beings¹, but there are differences of individuals. In a word, the Biblical-theological meaning of life depends primarily on the purpose of God. And, as the Book of Genesis points out, man is free to make of his life what he pleases. In light of this, part of the process of life is made up of one's response to God, in a free and

¹Genesis 1:26-27: Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (All quotes from the Bible come from the Revised Standard Version).

responsible atmosphere. Paul Tournier captures this essential fact in the following comment on the meaning of life.

However, no matter at what age this event takes place, the personal encounter with God constitutes the one great fact of existence. It is the only one which throws clear, though somewhat veiled, light upon life's meaning. The encounter may take place in childhood, as with Samuel, or in full manhood and in the midst of professional activity, as with Peter. Again, it may happen in old age, as with Simeon. It always constitutes the sole decisive experience. With Simeon, the older person can say, "Lord, now lettest thou servant depart in peace ... for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." To know God, his grace, his salvation --- this is the meaning of life. "What is man's chief end?" wrote Calvin at the outset of his catechism. "To know God. What is his joy? The very same."²

Out of this encounter, this confrontation of God face to face, man's life either becomes much fuller or it becomes more confused. Within this total picture of life, man has to exist from day to day as a creature of the Creator. In this everyday existence, one can see life totally by way of its parts, its everyday routine. For example, the young baby becomes aware that life does not operate around 'his' schedule. The baby becomes aware of some of the paradoxes and experiences of life very early: a child's frustration at not having the diapers changed the minute they are wet, or not getting the warm bottle of milk. Within the first few years of life, children begin to experience life more fully. They learn about frustration, joy, disappointment, and even death. Death comes to the young in the form of the death of animal

²Paul Tournier, The Seasons of Life, trans. John S. Gilmour (Richmond, Virginia, John Knox Press, 1963), p. 61.

friends, or immediate family relations. At a very early age in life, people are exposed to the many sides of life, if only dimly in a mirror.

As years increase, experience and experiences increase along with relationships. Man's understanding of life also grows. Dag Hammarskjöld's brief comment on life adds the perspective needed at this point.

Hunger is my native place in the land of the passions. Hunger for fellowship, hunger for righteousness --- for a fellowship founded on righteousness, and a righteousness attained in fellowship. Only life can satisfy the demands of life. And this hunger of mine can be satisfied for the simple reason that the nature of life is such that I can realize my individuality by becoming a bridge for others, a stone in the temple of righteousness. Don't be afraid of yourself, live your individuality to the full --- but for the good of others. Don't copy others in order to buy fellowship, or make convention your law instead of living the righteousness. To become free and responsible. For this alone was man created, and he who fails to take the Way which could have been his shall be lost eternally.³

Life becomes more than the physical process when man is confronted with his Creator. From this confrontation life has meaning because a purpose has been planted: God's will for man. As man lives his life in light of this encounter, the experiences he must endure carry with it new and solid meaning. Man is able to look upon life and live it as it comes along. The following sections will deal with life experience as they point to one part of life: Death. Death

³Dag Hammarskjöld, Markings, trans. Leif Sjöberg and W.H. Auden (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), p. 53.

is looked at as a coming to an end of some part of a person. There is a ceasing-to-exist. But, death does not necessarily mean the end of life. Death is also followed by a creative power from the Creator who continually puts life back into His creatures. And Life continues.

Separation

In life, man deals with different experiences daily which revolve around separation. Separation is used here as an illustration of death and a foretaste of death because of its frequent appearance in life and because it points to death so conclusively. Separation implies putting apart of things previously united, joined or assembled. Whenever something becomes separated, the original unity has been destroyed. If a unity or whole is destroyed, the parts are no longer together in a bond. The once united parts must die and live as separate entities. Using these same terms, the reverse is also true. Single individual entities, when they become a part of a whole, must have a part of their original structure destroyed. In a sense, the individuality of these parts must die for the entity to become part of a unity.

Biblically, sin is separation of man from God. The⁴ original unity created by God at the beginning of time has been destroyed by man. As a result of man's sin, separation⁵ of man from God has occurred. In man, that part of God

⁴Genesis 1.

⁵Genesis 3: 1-7.

6

within him which was the basis for the unity has been destroyed, and man has suffered separation from God. And in separation, there is death.

Separation as death and a foretaste of death becomes even clearer when the mother-child relationship is considered. In this relationship, union between the two begins nine months before birth. At birth, the child encounters a strange, frightfully different world with only the mother as a comforting aid. This dependency relationship must exist for a while for the growth of both persons. Then, there comes that time in the life of the mother which demands that her time be spent elsewhere. The naturally harmonious, functional association of mother and child must be broken. There must be a separation in which the old naturally harmonious state must die in part. In this case, there is an element of dependency which must die. And as a result of this death, growth can occur, and life can be an on-going process.

It represents for the child as well as for the mother a negative experience and a painful ending to the old, harmonious state.⁷

This, then, is one side of separation: the foretaste of death and the dying. In separation, the child experiences this radical change as does the mother. And for the child, this

⁶Genesis 1:26a: "Then God said, Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness..."

⁷Fritz Kunkel, Let's Be Normal, trans. Eleanore Jensen (New York, Ives Washburn Publisher, 1935), p. 160.

new experience of life becomes one of the first difficulties to deal with. But, what happens in this dying and death of separation?

It presents a hard task: the creation of a new harmony under new, uncertain conditions. If they are able to perform the task successfully, the negative experience results in a positive object lesson. And in the mother as well as in the child life unfolds with meaning of infinal purposiveness. If the task is not undertaken successfully, the negative experience results in a negative object lesson and objective growth is retarded in the mother as well as in child. The egocentric goals existing in the mother become more powerful and they are set in the child in whom they did not exist before.⁸

When this growth occurs, life is affirmed because it has been allowed to continue. This is seen as the key to this quote: the creation of a new harmony under new, uncertain conditions. Out of the death of a part of the old self, a new must come forth. If this does not occur, death predominates.

In the same way a mother suffers when she sees her child break away from her in order to take his place in the world, and at the same time be profoundly glad of it.⁹

It has been pointed out that death is a part of separation when that which has been separated has died. Where there are separation experiences, there are death experiences of a

⁸Ibid., p. 161.

⁹Paul Tournier, The Meaning of Persons, translated by Edwin Hudson (New York, Harper and Row, Publishers, 1957), p.55.

lesser degree. If one experiences separation over a period of time with no creation of a new harmony, the person may very likely be confronted with loneliness. Loneliness is closely related to separation not only because loneliness usually results from separation, but loneliness too is a form of death.

Loneliness

In many cases, separation may result in loneliness, which is a state or quality of being alone, a standing apart from others of its kind. In one sense, loneliness can be a direct result of separation taken one step further. Like separation, loneliness is also a constant, ever-present aspect of life. In fact, it is as intimate and as common to man as death. It does not respect persons, but it afflicts all men.

Loneliness is the specific apprehension of a person of his own death in relation to the impending death of all men and all things. Loneliness is the experience in which the fear of a man of his own personal death coincides with his fright of the death of everyone and everything else.¹⁰

In this apprehension, if it is true apprehension, one must become absorbed in a subject to the point the person makes this thought a living reality in his life. There is a wrestling with the issue as if it were happening then and there. And in this sense loneliness is definitely a foretaste of death.

¹⁰ William Stringfellow, Instead of Death (New York, Seabury Press, 1963), p. 15.

There are numerous myths which are attached to the state of loneliness. Under the general category of fictions of loneliness there are the following: unfilled time, that it can be satisfied in erotic infatuation, or that it can be answered in passion. The following quote will help clarify the issue.

Maybe a drink will induce you to forget that this loneliness is not the absence of others, but your presence among others when your presence is treated as absence.¹¹

From this quote, one sees that loneliness, as a further extension of separation, does become a little death when one is treated as a nobody by others. In this respect, people have a great power over others simply because, in a very real sense, they can kill them.

Loneliness is not simply a one-sided experience of life. Loneliness, like separation, has its positive, creative side. The best example of how loneliness can be constructive and creative is seen when the New Testament is examined. In Biblical terms, man has never existed without loneliness. Jesus Christ also lived with loneliness,¹² but he did not succumb to it because there is no man who is alone. To understand this fully, death has to be examined again. When Christ

¹¹ Ibid., p. 18

¹² Matthew 26: 36-46. (Jesus in Gethsemane)

submitted himself to death,¹³ the power of death was dissipated,¹⁴ and the dread was taken out of loneliness. The key turning point is that in suffering loneliness, one must suffer without despair. In a word, the radical loneliness of Christ is the assurance no man is alone.

Stringfellow points to where loneliness is seen at its most pronounced state. And at the same time, this may and can be the point where loneliness becomes creative and constructive.

In the event in which you are alone with your own death --- when all others and all things are absent and gone --- God's initiative affirms your very creation and that you are given your life anew. In the moment and place where God is least expected --- in the barrenness and emptiness of Death --- God is at hand. It is in that event that a man discovers it is death which is alone, not he.¹⁵

In this particular quote the key to understanding lies in the knowledge that one must trust in God's presence in all events and in any event, no matter when, no matter where. There is a point where loneliness reaches its peak: being a foretaste of death.¹⁶ And it is precisely at this point when loneliness can be and is conquered. At the point where

¹³Matthew 21: 45-56. (The Death on the Cross)

¹⁴I Corinthians 15:20-21, 54-57.

¹⁵Stringfellow, loc. cit., p. 21.

¹⁶Matthew 27: 45-54.

loneliness almost becomes master one must remember Christ's conquest of loneliness, and then life became real and purposeful. If loneliness is given the edge and has the opportunity to become master in one's life, the person is indeed dead. If loneliness can be looked in the face with the courage of Christ,¹⁷ it can be conquered and growth may continue.

Work

Work for many laborers is a slow painful death. In reality people do die from their work, and in this sense, they are in the process of dying while they are working. Even so, work is the most common means by which man seeks and hopes to justify his living.

In Biblical phraseology, work is not described in terms of a meaningless endeavour.¹⁸ For Christians, work becomes the medium in which the power and grace of God over death is exposed and praised. Work is a Christian's witness to and worship in the world that God has conquered death and man now is part of this conquest. In a most concrete, relevant way, Stringfellow points out how these ideas have meaning in our present life.

Yet even among those who are not economically poor, work remains, as a matter of experience, a great burden. Those whose work consists of serving the great corporate principalities, for instance, are subject to dehumanizing, enslaving,

¹⁷Matthew 27: 46b: My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?

¹⁸Genesis 3:17-19.

frequently idolatrous claims over their lives. Does anyone seriously suppose that the high-ranking executives involved in the price fixing scandals in some of the great corporations in this country are anything but prisoners, no more truly free than serfs, confined and conformed to the interests of the principalities they serve?¹⁹

Stringfellow makes a most convincing statement that all men are workers, enslaved to some degree. And the point is well taken that not only the poor are not free because of work, but the rich in their own subtle way, are experiencing the foretaste of death in their work. Out of this burden, there is that point where the work becomes either meaningful or meaningless. Work can and does become meaningful when there is some motivation behind the work. Or, as the contrary illustrates when work is nothing more than mere existence, it does become actual death.

Marriage

Marriage is commonly defined as that state of being married. Marriage is a relation between husband and wife, a close intimate union. In modern day terms, it is becoming more fashionable to define marriage in terms of one flesh. In marriage a man and a woman do become one flesh. This particular terminology is derived from the fact that one flesh means that through the sexual intercourse in which they consummate their love, they restore the original pattern

¹⁹ Stringfellow, loc.cit., p. 41.

20

of human unity.

Although the union in 'one flesh' is a physical union established by sexual intercourse (the conjunction of the sexual organs) it involves at the same time the whole being and affects the personality at the deepest level. It is a union of the entire man and the entire woman.²¹

From this quote it is plain to see what one flesh means as well as how it occurs. The one missing part of what has been quoted is that which occurs within each person before, during, and after becoming one flesh. And that point is the concern of this section of the Chapter. As the author of the quote points out, the one flesh phrase means total unity. In this total unity, there must also be a foretaste of death and death itself. In this unity the two individual persons become new and distinct, wholly different from and set over against other human relational unities. By doing this there must be a certain amount of dying which takes place. The total unity cannot take place unless there is not only a complete surrender of the old self made up of individual selfishnesses, but there must be a death of these parts of the old self. There must be a dying of one's privacy one shared only with himself before there was a one flesh. Once the unity has been established, a united privacy exists. When the two persons are told in the wedding service to leave father and mother, this is saying

²⁰ Derrick Sherwin Bailey, The Mystery of Love and Marriage (New York, Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1952), p. 44.

²¹ Ibid., p. 44.

that a dying to parents must take place. There can no longer exist the total dependency once enjoyed as a youth. The two persons are now one, to be dependent on each other for those needs once distributed by parents.

The dying aspect of life which is seen so vividly in marriage becomes just as vivid when the two become parents. As stated in the section on separation, in being a parent, the person must die to self for the child. This is one obvious part of the life of a parent. There is the other side in that the parents must die themselves, to themselves, and this is done quite simply to incorporate the child into their total family. Within the one flesh relationship there must be a dying again from within to enable the child to be allowed to enter the life of the family.

In this section, the foretaste of death and the actual fact of death has been looked at. This has been done through that part of life known as marriage, or one flesh. Once the death has occurred between two people, and there is now one flesh, there is also a new creation. In the process of becoming one flesh the two persons must experience a foretaste of death and death itself in order that the unity can be manifested. And once death has occurred, a new creation emerges in the form of one flesh. In marriage, out of the deaths which take place, a new creation emerges and life is affirmed. Life again becomes an on-going enterprise.

Summary

Within Chapter Two, life experience has been an illustration of both death and life. Our every-day living is filled with little deaths, and in most cases they are overcome. In some, one suffers a hundred fold. In a marking, Dag Hammarskjöld puts a bit of fresh light on the subject.

You told yourself you would accept the decision of fate. But you lost your nerve and when you discovered what this would require of you: then you realized how attached you still were to the world which has made you what you were, but which you would now have to leave behind. It felt like an amputation, a "little death", and you even listened to those voices which insinuated that you were deceiving yourself out of ambition. You will have to give up everything. Why, then, weep at this little death? Take it to you-quickly-with a smile, die this death, and become free to go further -- one with your task, whole in your duty of the moment.²²

The life experiences mentioned have a significant link between themselves. In each experience, separation is the key to understanding the dynamics of each. In these experiences separation is that which cuts off life. Without life, the object is either dying or is dead. Therefore, separation is a key to understanding the deaths each person experiences daily. Separation also opens up a person to the new creative power which God bestows on man, making life emerge out of a death experience.

²² Hammarskjöld, loc. cit., p. 158.

CHAPTER III

THE DYING

Introduction

In the last chapter, death was found to exist in everyday experience. In life experience death is present, along with life and the affirmation of living. This chapter will be an analysis of death from the point of view of the dying person. By approaching the dying person from three different directions (Truth, Middle Knowledge, and Communication-Companionship), the reality of death may be seen more fully. From each of these three directions, there will be something more revealed about death. Therefore, the basic purpose of this chapter is of a twofold nature: to gain a much more comprehensive knowledge of death, and to become much more aware of that person who goes through the death experience. A secondary purpose of this chapter is to deal with the difficulties which arise out of writing such a chapter.

Each person is confronted with facing his own death, alone. Each one of us must die and no other person can do this for us. There is also a corporateness about death in that we all die at one time. "All man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send¹ to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."

¹John Donne, "Meditations", The Seventeen Book of Prayer (New York, Macmillan Company, 1965), p. 195.

From this ever-present fact of death, one's life may be filled with fears and anxieties. In reality, these aspects of life are in direct proportion to one's understanding of that fact which has caused these aspects to become out of proportion. In any event, having to write about death causes problems which not only get in one's way when writing about the subject, but also when one deals directly with death.

Death

The word "die" immediately brings to mind the thought of the end, the ceasing of something or some function. "Dying" means at the point of death, or one who is about to "die". One who is in the process of dying means one drawing to a close, about to end life. Death is the actual state of being dead, the permanent ending of all life in a person, animal, or plant. "From the biological viewpoint, death is the termination of the active processes of living."² In a most significant article,³ Weisman and Hackett have spoken of death in three ways denoting types and degrees of involvement in the process. These observations add to our understanding of the totality of death. The impersonal death is characterized by an "I-it" relationship.

² Avery D. Weisman and Thomas P. Hackett, Predilection To Death, Death and Dying as a Psychiatric Problem (Reprinted from Psychosomatic Medicine, Vol. XXIII, No. 3, May-June 1961, Published by Paul B. Hoeber, Inc., Medical Division of Harper and Brothers), p. 12.

³ Ibid.

In this view, death is an impersonal event, stripped of the human element, and the dead are simply dead bodies classified or discarded according to various categories.⁴

The interpersonal death grows from the "I-thou" relationship.

This orientation is concerned with the objective fact of the death of the other one. Our subjective death is not involved; it is the loss of the other one that affects us. While impersonal death refers to "It is dead", interpersonal death means "Someone else is dead..." The death of another foreshadows our own. Interpersonal relations do not cease with death; the deceased may continue to influence the survivor for many years.⁵

And the final type and degree of involvement in the process of dying and death is the intrapersonal death. It has about it the awareness that might be characterized by the "I-I" relationship.

This is the only dimension of death that really matters. The impact of the dead body or death of the other one are important only because of their importance for subjective death: "I am dead." Intrapersonal death has double significance in that it applies both to the process of dying, particularly the fear of dying, and to the fact of subjective death; each has different psychological aspects.⁶

All three of these types of involvement have a common point: relationship. In each case, behind the type there was the relationship which controlled the involvement. In speaking of death, one must also speak about relationships. In the following three sections this element of involvement

⁴Ibid., p. 12.

⁵Ibid., pp. 12-13.

⁶Ibid., p. 13.

in the death process becomes significant. There is an interesting progression of involvement and importance of this concept as one moves from one section to the next.

Truth

When dealing with a dying person, one primary thought is the dying person's knowledge of this final event. Does this person have any knowledge of his forthcoming death? What emotional state is the dying person in during this period? And finally, does the person have a right to the truth about his forthcoming death? These are questions which inevitably must be handled when discussing the dying.

In the past, the predominant rule among doctors, clergy, and relatives was to keep the truth from the person if the truth involved death. There were numerous reasons for not telling the patient the truth. Most of the reasons did not come from the person himself, but from those around the person. Strangely enough, no one ever consulted the dying person on this question. And in many, many cases the person was eager to discuss death. As a result of this lack of openness and honesty, the person who was about to die was isolated even more from others. The person's sense of alienation often mounted to profound loneliness. The following quote from a doctor who deals primarily with terminal cases reveals some statistics of how the patients feel.

About twenty percent of the patients whose prognosis is terminal, or have an irreversible side, quite frankly want to know and are relieved and thankful the doctor told

them of their condition. This allows the patient to think about this and to talk about it openly and honestly with doctor and family. Also, the patient can do something about the final preparation. The other eighty to seventy-five percent do not want to know directly. About nine to ten percent do not wish to know at all. The largest percentage of patients will ask questions which skirt the issue of death. And this may go on for some time. Then, they usually ask the big question whether they are going to live or not. My policy is to always be as open, honest, compassionate and sensitive as I know how with the information.⁷

It seems to be quite clear at this juncture that a large percentage of the patients want to know about their condition. In the field of literature there is a most remarkable piece of writing on the dying person. Tolstoy's The Death of Ivan Ilych illustrates this point vividly.

What tormented Ivan Ilych most was the deception, the lie, which for some reason they all accepted, that he was not dying but was simply ill, and that he only need keep quiet and undergo a treatment and then something very good would result ... The awful, terrible act of his dying was, he could see, reduced by those about him to the level of casual, unpleasant, and almost indecorous incident (as if someone entered a drawing room diffusing an unpleasant odour) and this was done by that very decorum which he had served all his life long. He saw that no one felt for him, because no one even wished to grasp his position ... This falsity around him and within him did more than anything else to poison his last days.⁸

The quote illustrates in a most dramatic way the emotional strain which is thrust on a dying person by others.

⁷ Statement from an interview with Dr. James Tullis, December, 1965.

⁸ Leo Tolstoy, The Death of Ivan Ilych (New York, The New American Library, 1960), pp. 137-138.

Dr. Tullis (Dr. James Tullis is a Boston physician who does a great deal of work with terminal cases in his own practice, and is connected with training residents for the Harvard Medical School) has a procedure which he follows in dying situations. This procedure is valuable here because it contributes to a very sensitive understanding of the dying person in regard to his understanding of death.

I have a procedure I usually follow with patients I suspect whose case is irreversable. I will go to see them, explain that I have been called in and we are in the process of studying their case. I say I will look at the results of the tests and study them, and be back to see them in twenty-four hours. I ask them to think about any questions they have or would like to ask me. This gives them time to think over anything that is on their minds and gives them the time to think about what they would like to ask me. Then when I go back after the twenty-four hour period, I am honest with them on any question they ask. Here about twenty percent will ask right off what they have and maybe their chances. Then there is the nine to ten percent who ask about the weather, or what I have been doing, anything to avoid the question. This indicates something too. They either know what's wrong with them and they do not want to hear about it, or they just cannot bear to hear the answer. Then, there is the larger percent who will ask questions which I can only answer the way they want the question answered. ("Do I need X-Ray treatment, will I be in and out of the hospital quite a lot, will I need much care?") Within this group, these people will come around to the fact themselves, or ask me their diagnosis. And with these questions, they know pretty well what is going to be the answer of the doctor.⁹

This section has dealt primarily with the issue of the patient's understanding of his illness: the truth. The material presented has pointed out sufficiently a need

⁹Tullis, op.cit.

for truth as part of the total healing process. To pinpoint this particular issue even further, the following material from a doctor gives five primary reasons for telling the patient the truth.

First, the patient as a person has a right to know the truth about the diagnosis, treatment, and prognosis of his disease. Telling the patient the truth gives him the necessary knowledge to insure his freedom and responsibility as a person. Second, telling the truth arises from an understanding of the doctor-patient relationship as an I-Thou relation ... Third, the recognition of the doctor as a person demands this decision ... On the positive side, the doctor who tells the truth affirms the value of all human beings as persons ... Fourth, the doctor's decision to tell the truth keeps open the normal channels of communication with the patient. This decision eliminates the need for anyone to lie to the patient and removes a heavy burden from the family ... Fifth, and finally, the decision to tell the patient the truth permits the doctor to give the patient helpful information about his disease and its treatment and to preserve the patient's hope.¹⁰

Moving closer to the point made in this section, one must ask the question, does the dying person know? This question will be covered in the following section.

Middle Knowledge

One of the most neglected aspects of working with death is the dying person himself. The medical profession through

¹⁰Loarn Beaty Pemberton, Should The Doctor Tell The Patient The Truth, A Theological Analysis (Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas, in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Masters of Arts, 1965), pp. 128-129.

the discipline of psychiatry has realized in recent years the deeper needs of this person. One of the most important discoveries has been the patient's knowledge of his forthcoming death. One of the most significant landmarks on this subject is a group of articles written by Dr. Avery D. Weisman and Dr. Thomas P. Hackett, both of Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston. In a study with a number of terminal cases, they report the following:

Early in our work with these twenty patients, two striking facts emerge. First, none of these patients ever allude directly to their future or of dying. The second fact was less obvious and revealed itself only after the doctor-patient relationship had been well established. Each of these patients knew, to some extent, that he was dying and that facts were being withheld.¹¹

After making these preliminary statements, they go on to define this condition in the dying patient.

Patients may know they are dying, but, at the same time, be unable to accept the fact that they will be dead. This paradox has been described elsewhere and is by no means confined to the dying. All of us recognize that death is a property of life, but still find it impossible to imagine ourselves dead. It presents a conflict --- a state of mind wherein the patient can repudiate death while realizing that he dies. Because he is between what he knows and what he cannot know, we call this state of mind middle knowledge. The patient vacillates between hope and despair. Pulled, on the one hand, by the optimism of physician and relatives, he is quickly reminded of dying by pain and the persistence of symptoms

¹¹ Thomas P. Hackett and Avery D. Weisman, "The Treatment of the Dying," Current Psychiatric Therapies, Vol. II (Grune and Stratton, Inc., ed. Dr. Jules H. Masserman, 1961), p.2.

on the other. Middle Knowledge is neither static nor standard and varies from patient to patient as well as within the same patient at different times. At its simplest it can be regarded as the knowledge that one is dying without the ability to know fully or anticipate the fact of death. Middle Knowledge bears an inverse relationship to denial. The more a patient is able to deny that he is dying, the less Middle Knowledge he possesses.¹²

Understanding denial with regard to Middle Knowledge is an important factor because here is one area where one frequently encounters it. And it is interesting to note that massive denial seems to be more common among patients facing sudden death than among those dying slowly.

The following two case studies illustrate the point about Middle Knowledge Weisman and Hackett are making. The first brief conversation is between a man who is dying of cancer and the chaplain. The doctor has not told him of his condition. In the second interview, the same conditions exist.

Don't let me down boy ... Are you afraid? ...
Yes! ... Of what? ... Don't let me down boy.¹³

The patient looked worse; she was crying, moaning, and she looked as though she would not live more than a day or so. She said, "I have devoted my life to my husband. I have sacrificed a lot to give to the poor because he wanted to." Then, she cried, "I don't want to die. I don't want to leave

¹²Ibid., p. 4.

¹³Interview at Lemuel Shattuck State Hospital, Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, November 11, 1965, by Rayford B. High, Jr., Chaplain's Assistant, of Mr. Delos Cady.

my relatives alone. I don't want to die yet; I have too much to do.¹⁴

Both of the patients interviewed show some knowledge of their own approaching death. In these two cases, it happens that the patients are very much afraid of death. The point still remains that they knew that death was at their side whether they liked it or not. They were not going through an elaborate denial system, but they were struggling with their fear of death.

Communication and Companionship

No analysis of the dying is ever complete without some reference to the person's immediate needs. As the previous sections have pointed out, truth in any relationship is most important. There is poison in the system of all concerned if and when truth does not prevail. Again, Hackett and Weisman comment on this point.

It is a mistake for doctors to assume that all dying patients believe what they are told and accept preferred hope because they desperately need to. There are many patients who value truth in communication and who will lose confidence as soon as trust is violated. The dying patient needs communication and exchange with those around him more desperately than do other types of patients. Dying is lonely, and closeness and warmth are the only remedies. This is our principal reason for advocating truth ... Truth has many faces, each of which can be employed

¹⁴ Interview at Lemuel Shattuck State Hospital, Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, October 15, 1965, by Rayford B. High, Jr., Chaplain's assistant, of Mrs. Edith Christianson.

as it is needed. Nor does truth, under these circumstances, altogether cut off a source for hope. Hope for improvement is never lost even when a cure is impossible.¹⁵

This evidence from the medical profession supports this principal of keeping communications open. Tolstoy writes of the same thing when he portrays the last days of Ivan Ilych. "Peter went to the door, but Ivan Ilych dreaded being left alone. "How can I keep him here? Oh, yes, my
16
medicine.'"

The same point is made in Counseling the Dying in the conclusion.

First, we would encourage a more effective communication with the patient, so that what he is feeling as a person is known. The channels of this effective communication are developed more as a fine art ... It calls for the creating of a basic trust, and an ability to listen with sensitivity.¹⁷

And in the final paragraph of the book, the editors write the following:

In the face of death we must realize that none of us have any final answers to its meaning ... But we do have a common interest in the experiences that all ultimately share. When we can face it with honesty, keep open the channels of real communication, surround it with loving concern of a real community that cares to the end, and enrich our understanding by an honest and unmasked dialogue among all concerned, the way may be open toward a new era in the care for the dying as well as our care for the living.¹⁸

¹⁵Hackett and Weisman, op.cit., pp. 5-6.

¹⁶Tolstoy, op.cit., p. 137.

¹⁷Margaretta K. Bowers, et al., Counseling the Dying (New York, Nelson and Company, 1963), p. 154.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 165

The main point is simply the patient is given an opportunity to exercise his freedom as a person. If this atmosphere is not present, the burden of falsity and dishonesty persists and the burden is so heavy life ceases to exist. The following interview points to this emphasis quite profoundly and in a very moving way.

"I don't want to leave my relatives alone. They may not love me when I die," said Mrs. C. I asked her, "Do you still love your husband?" "oh, yes, immensely, but he's been dead two years" she replied. I said, "I know, but you see even after we die, we still have people who love us." "Oh, I guess that's right", she answered. Then we talked about her feeling toward her husband. There is guilt here on her part, because she objected to her husband's generosity, prohibiting Mrs. C. from saving any money. "My husband was ill for ten years before his death, and I had to look after him," she said. She said more about the details of her husband's job and illness. Then, she talked about her thankfulness that I was there with her during her illness. She also thanked me for letting her say all she had said. I closed with a prayer and left.¹⁹

Summary

This chapter has analyzed death through the dying person, his forthcoming death, Middle Knowledge, and Communication-companionship. Out of this analysis emerges the fact that the dying person is still a person with deeply personal needs. The dying person, through some technique,

¹⁹Interview at Lemuel Shattuck State Hospital, Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, by Rayford B. High, Jr., Chaplain's assistant, October 14, 1965, of Mrs. Edith Christianson.

not so unknown to us, has a knowledge of this forthcoming death. In these situations, openness and honesty are demanded. Through this openness and honesty communication can continue, and the dying person can enjoy the final hours and minutes of companionship, minus the too ever-present burden of dishonesty. Many times through this simple human honesty, one to another, relationships have been strengthened and growth has occurred during these last minutes, hours, or even days.

CHAPTER IV

OBSERVERS

Introduction

This chapter is an examination of those who observe the dying and death itself. Most of the material is clinically orientated, coming from the hospital setting. By using the clinical material, a particular group will be observed: the healing team. This consists of those professional people who contribute to the welfare and care of the dying person. Included in this group are doctors (physicians, general practitioners, psychiatrists), nurses, and clergymen. The material which follows will be restricted in that it too must fall within the criterion of the thesis. And, at this point, the material will serve to add to the understanding of death as well as to the concept and reality of the fear of death.

Doctors

Of the three members of the healing team mentioned, the doctor encounters death directly and indirectly more than the others. In the following paragraphs, there will be presentations of different understandings from the medical profession, followed by a section on the defenses this profession uses.

In a paper delivered at the University of Toronto Department of Medicine, Dr. Daniel Cappon makes the following statement:

Men of medicine have eschewed public utterances on the dying patient. The surgeon is superstitious. He needs to be optimistic and shut out twinges of professional guilt and worry. He turns away. The physician feels impotent. Though sympathetic, he turns away.¹

This quote happens to be painfully honest. There is the other side to the problem. Today, in the twentieth century of science and reason, the doctor has become a high priest in the cult of "health and beauty forever." In fact, the doctor is permitted to avoid the thought of death if he wishes, because most patients are not rude enough to ask about death. Many of the strange notions a doctor lives with are a result of his training. August Kasper makes this clear in an article in The Meaning of Death, entitled "The Doctor and Death." Dr. Kasper makes the point that a physician's training stresses "scientific objectivity," and physicians are often fond of mistaking themselves for scientists. The combination of what society has imposed on the doctor, and his early medical training, all point to a unique position for the doctor.

I will only mention the ungrateful affrontery of one who dies despite our most skillful ministrations, the narcissistic damage to a vaunted intellect proved ignorant, the deep wounds to omnipotence when we are shown to be quite impotent. In addition, we are busily denying death, and here is a person doing his level best to demonstrate its reality. I submit that it is no wonder psychiatrists say little can be done with dying patients; it is true, but I suspect it is not the fault of the dying patient. The counter-transference

¹Daniel Cappon, "The Dying", The Psychiatric Quarterly, Vol. 33 (Utica, New York, State Hospital Press, 1959), p. 466.

expectation, that all patients get well under our care, is an opposition to the sympathetic and realistic words of Trudeau in delineating the physician's function-- "to cure sometimes, to relieve often, to comfort always."²

Seldom is the time a doctor is able to go beyond the language of his own profession and speak about death in a personal way. In Reader's Digest, March, 1964, there is an article by the editor-in-chief and publisher of M.D. Dr. Felix Marti-Ibanez speaks very frankly about his understanding of death in a most striking way.

Death is an essential attribute of life, and life should never become a hospital or a clinic in which we dare not live for fear of death ... What are the roots of the fear of death? First of all, fear of pain and of the feeling of anguish that is implicit in dying. Second, the sadness of leaving our loved ones and all those things -- work, joys -- that bind us to the world. Third, and perhaps most important, fear of the unknown.³

Thus far, there have been three different opinions from doctors. In each case, there are significant points of agreement where most doctor's opinions will be crystalized. Many times, when one looks at the negative side of life, criticism, fear, and anxiety, there is much reflected about the positive elements of life. In Counseling the Dying, Bowers, et al., there is a chapter dealing with the living and death. Included in this chapter are "Masks" the physician

²August Kasper, "The Doctor and Death", The Meaning of Death, ed. Herman Feifel (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1959), p.266.

³Felix Marti-Ibanez, "A Doctor Looks At Death," Reprint from Reader's Digest (Pleasantville, New York, March, 1964).

hides behind to protect himself against a person-to-person encounter with the person as well as death. It is appropriate to mention these masks as commentaries on what has just been said.

There is the mask of professional language, where he knows what he is saying but is quite sure that the words he uses have little or no meaning for the patient. Here language violates its function, for rather than communicating meaning it denies it ... There is the mask of cynicism. Here the things that are sacred to the patient are profaned or made common in the attitude of the physician ... To deny the deeper meaning of life is protection against the deeper meaning of death. There is the mask of materiality ... There is the mask of impersonality ... There is the mask of ritualized action ... The mask of hospital routine subtly strips the patient of those aspects of his life that measure his personality and his dignity ... There is the mask of the "it-it" relationship.⁴

This final section on doctors as observers is from material gathered in a personal interview with Dr. Tullis. Dr. Tullis makes a very important point when discussing some of the problems doctors have with death.

There are a number of doctors who simply lie about the patient's condition to avoid telling him what is really wrong with him. This comes as a result of being influenced by the European medical profession where the doctor and patient never discuss the patient's condition. (This is one of the most difficult problems we face with foreign people who do residency here --- they are overwhelmed to discover our method.) In the twenties this country was influenced heavily by the German and Austrian schools, and probably here was where we got this new approach. In fact, in most of the new men, we see this trend and it is so much better than the old school.⁵

⁴Margaretta Bowers, et al., Counseling the Dying (New York, Nelson, 1964), pp. 53-55.

⁵Tullis, op. cit.

And finally, Dr. Tullis speaks about some of the final minutes of death.

Death is very peaceful -- contrary to what has been blown out of proportion; death is not traumatic. Death in most cases is peaceful, in fact one of the most peaceful things that happens in life. Most people simply just go to sleep. And this is so peaceful because the person is at peace. He has accepted this situation, has thought through it, and knows what it means for him.⁶

What this analysis has pointed out most clearly is that doctors are persons too. Regardless of their profession and the profession's purpose in life, the man who carries out the duties of such a profession is still a human being. These masks are primarily the same as the masks other people wear, but with just a little different twist to them.

Nurses

Nurses are the most neglected part of the healing team in regard to their preparation, yet they are the ones who have the longest period of contact with dying persons and death. From the very beginning of their entry into the nursing profession, they are handicapped in many ways.

The nurse's training programs do not allow much space for dealing with the dying person and death. Nurses in any hospital will confess that their training sadly neglected this area. Often the most nurses receive in their training is a

⁶ Tullis, Op.cit.

brief half-hour discussion of the topic.

In the everyday life of the hospital, nurses take their orders from the doctor, and carry out his commands. In the routine of their hospital work, nurses really are forced into adopting a certain ritual which keeps them separated from the patient and death. This is done by keeping up with the ever-increasing duties, especially in a dying person's room. In this respect, the nurse like the doctor can hide behind the ritual. The nurse generally cannot answer the questions of the dying patient: this is the doctor's sacred ground!

The nurses find themselves on the spot in the death situation because of their lack of training. With this constant personal contact with the dying person, the relationship is often strained. And because of this, nurses have to find ways of dealing with their feelings. This release can and does come when the nurses deal with other patients, fellow nurses, doctors, family, clergy, and even the janitorial staff. It is no wonder that nurses are in most cases caught between their professional responsibility and their own personal feelings. Some have developed their own ideas, reactions, and feelings which are quite constructive. But more often the case is that they have to keep their feelings within.

Clergymen

The final member of the healing team is similar to the other members just analyzed. Whereas the doctors and the nurses have specifically spelled out functions with the dying person,

the clergyman's function is quite varied. This is partially a result of the ambiguities of his profession as well as his own personal view of his work.

As in the other professions, the clergyman's basic response to the death situation may come from his formal theological education. A clergyman's professional training of how to deal with death comes from his study of pastoral theology. There are a variety of schools of thought in pastoral theology. Within the Protestant tradition, the established, more widely followed school is that of Seward Hiltner. Another fairly new man in the field and one just as competent is Wayne Oates. From these two men one will necessarily gather the main line Protestant outlook on pastoral theology.

Wayne Oates, a leading Baptist Seminary professor, has laid a much needed emphasis on personal and spiritual presence to this field. For Oates, pastoral counseling is in and of itself a total experience of prayer. A key phrase for Oates is the "Shepherd of his sheep."

A unique characteristic of pastoral counseling is that the counselor has the primary responsibility for dealing with the counselee's capacity to communicate with and relate to God. The heart of this capacity is the experience of prayer.⁷

In this sense, prayer is the all important relationship which must exist between man and man and God. And Oates goes on

⁷Wayne Oates, An Introduction to Pastoral Counseling (Nashville, Broadman Press, 1959), p. 212.

to say that the Holy Spirit is the true counselor in a truly prayerful relationship. "The Holy Spirit, given the opening of consistently cultivated prayer life in the pastor himself, is the strengthener and counselor of that pastor."⁸

So from this one Protestant slant, one is impressed with the deeply spiritual relationship which must exist for a pastor to be a pastor. Oates says much about different situations and what must be done in each, but at the very bottom of these situations is still this relationship of shepherding, and of prayer.

Seward Hiltner also holds to the shepherding point of view of pastoral counseling. Hiltner begins his whole pastoral theology inquiry by establishing the discipline as a part of a larger one: theology itself.

Pastoral Theology is defined here as that branch or field of theological knowledge and inquiry that brings the shepherding perspective to bear upon all the operations and functions of the church and the minister, and then draws conclusions of a theological order from reflection on these observations.⁹

He is extra sensitive to the person being counseled. In fact, he feels the criterion of counseling lies, not so much in the intention and attitude of the pastor, but within the readiness and need of the parishoner.

⁸Wayne Oates, Protestant Pastoral Counseling (Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1962), p. 59.

⁹Seward Hiltner, Preface to Pastoral Theology (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1957), p. 20.

To paraphrase Paul, we may have all knowledge -- of something out there, an object detached from us -- and yet we may well be nothing -- if we are without a genuineness that comes only from penetration into our own attitudes.¹⁰

These two approaches to pastoral theology do not in any way exhaust the trends; they only serve to illustrate two approaches presently behind the education of clergymen.

When this analysis turns to ministering to the dying, the material becomes scarce. One of the earliest works done on the subject is The Art of Ministering to the Sick, by Cabot and Dicks. This work is so important because what was said back in 1936 is still being said today with a little more articulation and a few more clinical observations.

As my hospital experience multiplied I slowly came to the conviction that the ideal which we want for patients who are face to face with death is summed up in those words: It is all right; whether I get well or whether I die it is all right.¹¹

And in speaking about the clergyman who is ministering to the dying, the authors state the following:

Moreover he brings the Christian belief that one may be so strengthened by faith in God that one passes through the experience of death and into continued life, lifted above the routine of the sick room. Where does it come from? The Minister.¹²

¹⁰Seward Hiltner, The Counselor in Counseling (New York, Abingdon-Cokesby Press, 1952), p. 7.

¹¹Richard C. Cabot and Russell L. Dicks, The Art of Ministering to the Sick (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1936), p. 299.

¹²Ibid., p. 314.

The Rev. Robert E. Buxbaum, Protestant Chaplain at San Antonio State Hospital has done a most recent study of the Protestant ministry to the dying. In this article, Chaplain Buxbaum does a thorough study of anxiety, a child's understanding of death, contemporary attitudes of death, the patient's knowledge of death, and he ends with the key to his article: think through your own death. There are a small number of other works on the subject by clergymen, but the intent here is to present three attitudes. From these approaches, the general feeling, reaction, and point of view of ministering to the dying can be seen.

In Counseling the Dying, the authors present a most useful group of masks the clergy wear.

There is the mask of set-apartness ... The full meaning of this separateness may be more the investment of the congregation than the assumption of the pastor ... There is the mask of ritual action. The use of formalized prayers and traditional procedures makes it possible to enter into a human relationship protected against the full encounter with the person, because the communication is general rather than specific. There is the mask of a special language ... There is the mask of special attire ... There is the mask of business.¹³

All of these masks suggest the same thing that was revealed in the masks of the physicians: the desire not to be personally confronted with the dying person, or with death itself.

In summary, the clergyman is also a human being with definite human needs and weaknesses. One of the weaknesses

¹³ Bowers, op. cit., pp. 67-68.

present in this profession as well as in others is the desire not to have to deal with death. If a death is dealt with, one's whole life is called into question. And maybe there are no answers available for a person confronted with death. There are several outstanding qualities which have emerged. Some have come by way of looking at what a clergyman ought not do. In the summary to his article, Chaplain Buxbaum has pointed to a most important dimension of the ministry to the dying.

It seems to me that of all the hospital personnel, of all the people whom the patient must see, it is the pastor alone who can go simply to "be with" the patient. In "being with" the patient, the pastor may break through some of the patient's isolation ... I would like to call the "being with" quality of the pastoral role an example of the incarnational ministry. Until the truth of the love of God becomes incarnate in our relationships, in our willingness to "be with" the dying person, it will not get communicated. We each become representors of God. Through our love, God's love becomes a reality. Is it not often true that our most profound experiences with God's love are communicated to us in this way? This communication is the mode and goal of the Protestant ministry to the dying.¹⁴

All that has been said seems to point to the two important factors: the relationship and the communication in this relationship. Throughout the analysis of the clergyman, one point keeps coming up in different forms: the clergyman does not do so much in these situations; he

¹⁴ Robert E. Buxbaum, "The Protestant Ministry to the Dying" (San Antonio, Texas, Paper presented at the Presbytery of Alamo, 1963), pp. 19-20.

brings something to the dying person. First of all he brings himself, and through the work of the Holy Spirit, God can and does come to the person.

Summary

This chapter has pin-pointed three areas where the professional people have exhibited problems in their relationship with death. There seems to be a need of a more effective communication with the patient, so that what the patient feels as a person is known. A new climate in the professional and general community in regard to death and dying is needed. And closely connected to this is the need for a free and open dialogue among the members of the professional community who are responsible for the communication with and climate for those in death situations.¹⁵

In a very real sense, what is needed is a reappraisal of the relationship between the three professions mentioned in this chapter. The doctors, nurses, and clergymen are those persons who can make up the healing team which treats and ministers to the dying. This group can exist only if several principles are present. If a healing team is to be totally effective, first of all there must be open communication to the point that each person has his or her duties clearly defined, and that each understands why and how he or she is to do this work. This comes only when

¹⁵Bowers, op. cit., pp. 158-160.

there is a trust, an open and honest relationship among the whole group. From this relationship, the individual members may be able to work with each other and help each other where there are weaknesses. In fact, the strengths of each person must be pooled to be used for the purposes of the healing team. And in doing this, the individual members can offer their strengths to other members of the team if and when they are needed. There must be more communication and trust through an openness and an honesty which is a necessity in any form of relationship which expects to have positive value. This can occur when the members of the healing team are willing to bring their strengths as well as their weaknesses to the situation, and share them with all.

CHAPTER V

DEATH: BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL

Introduction

This chapter is an examination of death from the point of view of the Bible and Christian Theology. The underlying assumption of this chapter is that what has been brought out in the previous chapters is found in the Bible and consequently in Christian theology. Therefore, this chapter serves to bring these previous observations together in their final expression, Biblically and Theologically.

In this examination of Bible and theology, there will be an analysis of the Old Testament's point of view of death, followed by an analysis of the New Testament's point of view of death. Then, there will be a section on the theology of death. And finally, there will be a summary to the chapter.

Old Testament

Within the Old Testament, one is struck with the uncertainty as to what it teaches about death. In one sense, this chapter will be an historical development of the understanding of death.

In discussing death in the Bible, one of the difficulties is finding a starting place. In the Old Testament, one does not begin the examination with death, but with life. Life for the Israelite is a gift of God; he loves it, meets it with optimism. Life is also more than just being. It is

total in that it includes in its nature the desire to express itself, to act, to move, to fulfill itself, to grow, to flourish, and accomplish its end. So, for the Israelite life is good, and it is identical with blessing. There is an abundant group of passages where life and blessing are¹ mentioned together. And close to this there are an even greater number of passages where life is described as life² in the Lord. In this life, there is a presupposition that there are such qualities as success, security, and stability.

It is not given to man either to create or to preserve life. Life depends upon God, but Yahweh is in no way identified with life. He forms it, He renews it, He disposes of it freely, He is its Lord, and is thus clearly distinguished from a mere life force. Yahweh is the living God, not only the God of Life. Yahweh creates life, sustains it, and restores it, by His creative and redemptive deeds which are wrought into the story of world-salvation... Though the life of Israel and of each of its members derives from a creative act of Yahweh, the Old Testament is ultimately less concerned with life's origin than with its preservation, which is definitely bound up with the keeping of the agreement uniting the God of Israel to His people.³

Thus the primary emphasis is upon life. But, death must be dealt with. At the beginning of the Old Testament the reader is told that man is not immortal, and there is nothing

¹Deut. 30:19
Pss. 24:5; 129:8

²Pss. 36:9; 54:4; 119:40; 119:159; 121:7; 133:3

³William S. Walker, "Death and the Hereafter in the Old Testament" (Camp Capers, Texas, This talk was delivered at the Ministers' Retreat of the Presbytery of Alamo, November 8, 1963), p. 2.

eternal in him. Death is seen as a universal and natural fact that concerns the whole being of man.

One way the Old Testament looks at death is as the normal end of life. A human life, arrived at its full maturity⁴ is taken away naturally. After arriving at the end of life, man is viewed as no different than all earthly creatures⁵. Another way the Old Testament views death is as the opposite of life.

The stoppage of breath, the loss of all movement and of all capacity for relations with others, all make death appear to be the opposite of life. Deprived of life and separated from the world of the living, the dead person becomes impure (Num. 9:6; 19:11, 16, 18; 31:19), and contact with him must be avoided. The deceased and all things related to him consequently took on an aspect of mystery.⁶

von Rad makes this point in reference to the Yahwist writer.

We should also mention Jahwism's attitude to death, for here again it was particularly zealous in stripping death of the dignity allowed it in myth. Jahwism regarded the actual event of dying as something caused directly by God himself (Deut. XXXII: 39; I Sam. II:6; Ps. LXXXVIII: 7 [6]). This meant, however, that the dead were excluded from fellowship with Jahweh and were in the highest degree unclean. We find in Ps. LXXXVIII a definition of the state of being dead which, theologically speaking, leaves practically nothing more to be said: the dead were cut

⁴Gen. 6:3
Ps. 90:10

⁵Josh. 23:14; I Kings 2:2; Job 30:23

⁶E. Jacob, "Death", Interpreter's Dictionary of The Bible, Vol. I, ed. George A. Buttrick et. al., (New York, Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 802.

off from praising Jahweh and from hearing him proclaimed, and above all, they were cut off from him himself.⁷

The result of this was a vacuum in which this mysterious world (of the dead) was entirely divested of its sacral character. In reality, the dead remained an indefinable third party between Yahweh and his creation. With this state of theological understanding established, Israel had another interpretation for death: death became a force of destruction.

As faith mediated on the problem of death, its destructive aspect became dominant. A premature death was thought to be a punishment meted out by a hostile power. This was not at first considered to be the power of Yahweh ... Never in biblical texts is the power of death exercised without the control of God.⁸

At this point in the development of death, Israel was confronted with a problem. Since God has the power of life, he may use this power in other ways than creation. If he permits and uses this power there must be some reason for this.⁹ God uses his power over life because man has sinned and has rendered death inevitable. It is especially significant that before the Fall man was not concerned with death (either because he was unaware of it, or because he was not affected by it). After the Fall, man is under the

⁷G. von Rad, Old Testament Theology, Vol. II, trans. D.M.G. Stalker (New York, Harper and Row, 1965), p. 349.

⁸Jacob, op. cit., p. 802.

⁹Gen. 2-3

sign of death from the beginning of life. As the Old Testament points out, this is not the end of the story: man is still free to choose between good and evil.

In thus defining the dominion of death, one sees that the power of death is further manifested in all lessening of the vital force. The most important example of this is illness, for to be ill is to be in the hold of death and already in Sheol ... Falling into the power of death does not mean passing beyond the limits of Yahweh's authority; he employs the forces of death to punish those who have voluntarily turned from him.¹⁰

If one goes back to the earliest texts on death, there is evidence that Yahweh's power did not extend into the place where the dead resided: in Sheol. Man, after death, was left to other powers than Yahweh's. Not until later times does this idea become inadequate. Yahweh is looked upon as having more power and his will as being more inclusive than just the living.

Amos already affirms, however, that the power of Yahweh extends to Sheol (Amos 9:2; cf. Ps. 139:7f.). He controls the forces of death and uses them to serve his holy will (Hos. 13:14). The entry of Yahweh into the dominion of death not only allowed him to dispose of the power of death, but ultimately led to conflict between him and death.¹¹

In general then, death for the Israelite is looked upon as an adversity, the supreme enemy of man. Before the Fall, death was a part of the natural order of creation. When man sinned, death was transformed into an unnatural

¹⁰Jacob, op. cit., p. 807.

¹¹Jacob, op. cit., p. 803.

event. Death takes on a new meaning in that it is the sign of a breach between God and man: separation.

Death presents itself as a personal and direct "No" spoken by God to the man whom He has called to life. But abandonment by the living God cannot be absolute; His indifference towards those who are no more cannot be His final word; one day He will cease to suffer the existence of Sheol along with Himself. Slowly, under the pressure of manifold circumstances, the old covenant believers progress towards the conviction that the living God can and will make all things new; Israel's vision of the future in store for the dead little by little grows distinct, until at last it culminates in belief in the resurrection.¹²

In the end, death is the final human event, imposing itself on all men. Man is indeed in the power of death. In later times, this view is slowly transformed, and Yahweh is seen as the giver of life to the departed. This view of Yahweh and death still remains only peripheral.¹³

New Testament

Moving from the Old Testament to the New Testament, there is a significant difference in the number of references to death. There are only about a third as many references as compared to the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, it was pointed out that there was a developmental strain running from beginning to end. It is only natural that this end finds its manifestation in the New Testament. In a sense, the stage has been set, and the New Testament is the final act

¹²Walker, op. cit., p. 7.

¹³Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2

in the play, "Death."

In the Old Testament, there is material about death. But, the New Testament says less about this as such, and concentrates on the man-God relationship in death, more than the Old Testament does.

If one is to be correct in stating the problem, one must say the New Testament teaching on death is simply the teaching of the resurrection. The point that is essential to the thesis is not so much the New Testament teaching on resurrection (this would be most important if the thesis were to deal with this subject) but the teaching about dying and consequently the fear of death.

Before treating that section of the New Testament, fear of death, it is necessary to look at St. Paul's letter to the Romans. In this letter, the meaning of death becomes quite clear. Thanatos, as a general rule, is simply the termination of life, whether from natural or from external causes. For Paul and other New Testament writers, death is the central part of the act of Atonement without which man's release from the power of sin would not have been possible. The Old Testament points out that death is the penalty for sin. Paul draws on his own Jewish background many times when speaking of death.

Death is sometimes represented as a cosmic demon, to whom the cosmic demon-sin has given power over man. By submitting to death Himself, Christ freed His followers from the dominion of death, but the deliverance will not be complete until the

consummation of history.¹⁴

In the following paragraphs, there is an analysis of three passages from Romans where Paul deals with death. In each passage there is a significant contribution made in understanding death, and why there is death.

Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned.¹⁵

From this passage, several points concerning death emerge. It is impossible for modern man to accept such a view as an account of the origin of death. For us, death is a natural process inseparable from organic existence in the world. For the Jew though, the Jewish religion knew nothing of a life after death, so that death meant separation from God. (The Dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence. Ps. CXV: 17).

This feeling, no doubt, Paul shared, and it is for him one of the greatest blessings of Christianity that bodily death no longer has this character, but to be 'absent from the body' is to be 'present with the Lord' (II Cor. V:8). But he is here speaking of death apart from Christ, of bodily death as symbol of final separation from God, which we might describe as spiritual death.¹⁶

In this passage, it is important to see how sinful man can be dead while he lives, and the bodily death is his fitting

¹⁴H. Rhys, The Epistle to the Romans (New York, MacMillan Company, 1961), p. 234.

¹⁵Romans 5:12

¹⁶C.H. Dodd, The Epistle to the Romans (London, Fontana Books, 1963), p. 102.

end.

In the first few verses of chapter six of Romans, Paul makes his point about death, sin, and Christ. Paul begins to make his point by stating the following: "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ were baptized into his death?"¹⁷ In baptism one takes on all of Christ, even his death.

We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father we too might walk in newness of life.¹⁸

When one makes a connection by being in Christ, the consequences are clear: we, as followers, receive all that Christ received. In Christ's earthly life, he was subjected to death, but death's claim could be legitimate only when sin had established dominion. Since sin had failed to do so in Christ, both cosmic demons had exceeded their rights, and by exceeding them had forfeited them. This is clear in this chapter of Romans where sin and God are set in anti-thesis.

The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.¹⁹

The importance of the first nine verses of chapter six is the establishment of the fact that in becoming a Christian

¹⁷Romans 6:3

¹⁸Romans 6:4

¹⁹Romans 6:10-11

a man has definitely passed into a new order of life, over which death has no sway. In reality, there is not too much more that can be said beyond what Paul himself says on the subject. Turning to chapter eight, Paul states the following:

20

"For set me free from the law of sin and death." It is clear that the believer is possessed by the Holy Spirit. In his use of the terms here, Paul is thinking very definitely of real liberation from the present power of sin, even death. As sin's law brought death, so the law of the spirit brings life; as sin's law made him a prisoner, so the law of the spirit has set man free. And this liberation is a result of God's work. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: he has sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.

For those who live according to the flesh
set their minds on the things of the flesh,
but those who live according to the Spirit
set their minds on the things of the Spirit.²¹

Those who are in the flesh cannot satisfy God, as Paul has pointed out. Paul clarifies this statement about the interests of the flesh in Romans 7:7-13. From death man has passed to life and peace.

Now it is important to look at I Corinthians 15 to see the final outcome of what death means for man. This analysis

²⁰Romans 8:2

²¹Romans 8:5

of I Corinthians 15 naturally leads to a brief look at the classical statement of the doctrine of the resurrection of the body as a direct and explicit consequence of our Lord's own resurrection. But, from the Corinthian passage the phrase "fear of death" will be elaborated also. This whole block of scripture comes as a restatement against the background of reports that some at Corinth deny the resurrection. Beginning in verse twenty and following, Paul restates what he has said in Romans 5:12-18.

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.²²

The end comes when Christ has destroyed every rule, authority, and power. In a word, when Christ is all in all, and above all, the kingdom is delivered to God the Father. Christ must reign until he has put all hostile spiritual powers under his dominion. "The last enemy to be destroyed is death."²³ With this last demonic power which dominates the present age, the kingdom may come. "When all things are subjected to him ...²⁴ that God may be everything to everyone." Another way of looking at I Corinthians 15:26 is that once this last enemy, death, has been overcome, there is no longer any obstacle keeping us from being at one with God.

²²I Cor. 15:20-21

²³I Cor. 15:26

²⁴I Cor. 15:28

Theology of Death

In order to talk about a theology of death, one must ask whose death: man's, God's, animal's or plant's? In analyzing man and death, Christianly speaking, one must also speak of relationships: the relationship between God and man. Previously, it was pointed out there is a finiteness in the world and man is in part associated with finitude. In the story of creation,²⁵ there is a doctrine of creation which includes man. This doctrine rests upon the interpretation that the created world, the world of finite, dependent and contingent existence,²⁶ is not evil by reason of its finiteness. Living in today's world has given us an added understanding of this particular doctrine in which man is included.

Nevertheless Christianity has never been completely without some understanding of the genius of its own faith that the world is not evil because it is temporal, that the body is not the source of sin in man, that individuality as separate and particular existence is not evil by reason of being distinguished from undifferentiated totality, and that death is no evil though it is an occasion for evil, namely the fear of death.²⁷

The point here is that the finiteness, the dependency and the insufficiency of man are facts belonging to God's plan of creation. Man is part of this world, but man, because of

²⁵Gen. 1:31

²⁶Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, Vol. I (New York, Charles Scribners' Sons, 1964), p. 167.

²⁷Ibid., p. 167.

his freedom and individuality, may not be a slave to the temporal world in the end.

The whole import of the Christian doctrine of creation for the Christian view of man is really comprehended in the Christian concept of individuality. The individual is conceived of as a creature of infinite possibilities which cannot be fulfilled within the terms of this temporal existence. But his salvation never means the complete destruction of his creatureliness and absorption into the divine.²⁸

This leads to the focal point of the discussion of man as creature and God as creator. It has been noted that it is not Biblical to regard finiteness as such as evil. And it must be admitted that there is strong Biblical support for the conception of death as evil.²⁹ The New Testament analysis of death points to the fact that in Pauline theology, death is the consequence of sin. This could easily be interpreted dualistically, attributing sin to mortality and deriving mortality from sin. And one is hard-pressed to say exactly what Paul means. It is safe to say that for the purposes of the thesis, Paul frequently uses the concept of death symbolically to designate spiritual death. The best possible proof for this interpretation is found in I Corinthians 15:56: the sting of death.

In this view mortality, insecurity and dependence are not of themselves evil but become the occasion of evil when man seeks in his pride to hide his mortality, to overcome

²⁸Ibid., pp. 169-170.

²⁹Ibid., p. 173.

his insecurity by his own power and to establish his independence.³⁰

It must be noted that Paul, in his treatment of sin and death in Romans and I Corinthians, has introduced an element which seems inconsistent with the total Biblical doctrine of creation. It is correct to say that the point in the Biblical view of death is that it illustrates the difference between the majesty of God and the weakness and dependence of man as creature. And from this, one can assert fully the point that physical death should not be accepted as the final word about the fate of man.

Beyond the theological interpretation of man as creature, what else must be said regarding man-God-death? In the previous paragraphs, man and sin were discussed in relation to man's finiteness and God's infiniteness. Man is involved in sin and continues to be involved in sin. This occurs in dying and death sometimes, or symbolically, always. If a man is able to look at death as a crisis in his life, then this man may be able to see another aspect of his dying and his death. This would seem only natural to look at death as a crisis because of the very nature of death: a man no longer exists; he is no more.

In crucial situations there is the inescapable problem of requiring decisiveness. In crucial situations, the one predominant theme is ultimacy: whether one will live or die.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 174.

Carl Michalson in Faith For Personal Crises makes the observation that the English word crisis is cognate with the Greek word Krisis. And he also remarks that whenever this word Krisis appears in the New Testament it has a single meaning: Judgment.

As I have said, in every crucial situation a judgment, a decision is required. But in the New Testament the judgment referred to is never simply one man must make. It is always the judgment God has made.³¹

He follows this with the point he is making in regard to crises and judgment:

No discussion of crucial situations in life would satisfy the New Testament understanding of life which did not see within the situation the imminence of the Judgment of God, which is the presence of God's decision upon human life.³²

The judgment referred to here is particular judgment which refers to the judgment made with respect to each individual soul immediately upon the death of its body and before the final judgment on the last day.

The crisis in death can be seen quite clearly if one understands that every man really faces two deaths. There is the familiar biological event marked by mortuaries and monuments, funerals, ministers, flowers, and tears. But there is the other death which often goes unnoticed: the personal death. Michalson makes the comment that a man is a being

³¹ Carl Michalson, Faith For Personal Crisis (New York, Charles Scribners' Sons, 1958), p. 6.

³² Ibid., p. 6

who knows he dies and he attaches great meaning to his death. And since men know and attach meaning to their death, they suffer a possible second death in death. And that is the real crisis which may make their lives psychologically uninhabitable. And this second death is the fear of death.

But if one dies in Christ, he has already conquered the second death, even though the natural culmination of his life still lies ahead (Rom. 6:11; I Thes. 4:16; I Cor. 15:18). Death for the Bible is not simply the last moment of life; it is the last enemy. Because of that it is not something to be endured at the end of life but something to be conquered within life itself.³³

The discussion of death and sin has led to a discussion of crisis, death and judgment. The last two sections discussed point to the final examination of death: the last enemy, death. The section dealing with sin and death showed how the spiritual death of a man is related to sin, and in the previous section, death, as a crisis, was seen to involve naturally God's judgment. But what do we say about death itself? Sin and judgment have been discussed, pointing directly to death as seen as the last enemy. Therefore, it is necessary to look directly at death as the last enemy and point to how and why this is the last enemy.

Oscar Cullmann, in the Ingersol Lectures at Harvard University, 1954-55, has discussed the problem with such clarity and integrity it would be impossible to treat the subject without consulting his work. In his first chapter of Immortality of The Soul or Resurrection of the Dead?, he

³³Ibid., pp. 158-159.

deals with "The Last Enemy: Death". Cullmann gets at the subject by describing Socrates' death as presented in Plato's Phaedo, and the death of Jesus. Since Plato's death is not important at the moment, it is essential to look at his description of Jesus' death and the conclusions drawn from this analysis.

Throughout the Gospel accounts, especially in Mark 14-15, certain facts become clear to the reader about the way Jesus faced his own death.³⁴ He speaks of his soul being "very sorrowful, even unto death." In this setting, there are two important points: Jesus' fear of death itself, and his fear of being alone at death. For Jesus, death is the enemy of God, and to die means to be utterly forsaken. He would be alone, and this means he would no longer be in the hands of God, but in the hands of God's enemy: death. As Cullmann points out, the Epistle to the Hebrews has more to add to this picture:

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and fears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear.³⁵

Just before death, Jesus offers up a final cry of desperation:³⁶ "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Here Jesus experiences death as God's last enemy as being separated from

³⁴Mark 14:33

³⁵Hebrews 7:5-7

³⁶Mark 15:34

God who is life and creator of all life. As Cullmann puts it:

To be in the hands of the great enemy of God means to be forsaken by God. In a way quite different from others, Jesus must suffer this abandonment, this separation from God, the only condition really to be feared.³⁷

By looking carefully at Jesus' own death, one is able to understand more fully what this means for all mankind. Having gone through death himself in a most horrible way, he must be the very one who, in his death, conquers death. How is this conquering accomplished?

He cannot obtain this victory by simply living on as an immortal soul, thus fundamentally not dying. He can conquer death only by actually dying, by betaking Himself to the sphere of death, the destroyer of life, to the sphere of 'nothingness', of abandonment by God. When one wishes to overcome someone else, one must enter his territory. Whoever wants to conquer death must die; he must really cease to live --- not simply live on as an immortal soul, but die in body and soul, lose life itself, the most precious good which God has given us.³⁸

So, in death there is the destruction of all life created by God. This is why death is so fearful: life formed by God has been destroyed. Truly, this is the reason for man's fear of death. It would be deadly to stop at precisely this point. A word on resurrection must follow. Cullmann makes a valuable contribution at this point.

³⁷Oscar Cullmann, Immortality of The Soul or Resurrection of the Dead? (New York, Macmillan Company, 1964), p. 25.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 25-26.

... if life is to issue out so genuine a death as this, a new divine act of creation is necessary. And this act of Creation calls back to life not just a part of the man, but the whole man ... Resurrection is a positive assertion: the whole man, who has really died, is recalled to life by a new act of creation by God ... Whoever has not grasped the horror of death cannot join Paul in the hymn of victory: "Death is swallowed up -- in victory! Death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" (I Cor. 15:54) 39

Theologically, death is not death of the body. This becomes of little consequence once a person has overcome his fear of death. This can be done only in light of the life of Jesus' death: he died, overcoming that fear, and lives.

Summary

In summary, there is a noticeable amount of continuity. The Old Testament development of death progresses into a state where the New Testament becomes an answer to a problem left unanswered. In the theological exposition of the whole Bible, it becomes increasingly clear to the reader that death has a whole other-sidedness to it: the personal death.

In the Old Testament, the Jewish understanding of life meant total participation in and with Yahweh. With death, the individual's participation in the cult was extinguished, leaving the dead outside the reaches of the worship of Yahweh. Israel's understanding of death is not an easy one to grasp for several reasons. First of all, the whole state of death went through several stages of development. Secondly, and

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 26-27.

realistically, the Jewish nation had reached a point where death was a vacuum. The people did not know exactly what to do with death, and knew less what to do with the dead.

Taken exactly, the definition of what death is and means is not a matter of mere neutral empirical fact; it was not established once for all on the basis of definition common to all humanity. Rather, it was Jahweh who appropriated death for men. And what death was and was not, Israel came ever and again to learn anew from Jahweh ... death begins to become a reality at the point where Jahweh forsakes a man, where he is silent, i.e., at whatever point the life-relationship with Jahweh wears thin.⁴⁰

The New Testament naturally draws on its Old Testament heritage when describing how death came to man. In Romans, Paul goes to great lengths to show that death came by way of sin. Then, in his first letter to the Corinthians, he gets at the core of the meaning of death: the last enemy of God, the fear of death.

Dag Hammarskjöld, in Markings, adds a modern touch to the deeply spiritual insights of St. Paul.⁴¹

⁴⁰G. von Rad, Old Testament Theology, Vol. I, trans. D.M.G. Stalker (London, Oliver and Boyd, 1962), p. 388.

⁴¹"Do not seek death. Death will find you. But seek the road which makes death fulfillment."

"No choice is uninfluenced by the way in which the personality regards its destiny, and the body its death. In the last analysis, it is our conception of death which decides our answers to all questions that life puts to us. That is why it requires its proper place and time --- if need be, with right of precedence. Hence too, the necessity of preparing for it."

Dag Hammarskjöld, Markings, trans. Leif Sjöberg and W.H. Auden (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), pp. 159-160.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The aim of this concluding chapter is to set forth several principles or guidelines for those ministering to the dying. These are not hard and fast rules, but are meant to be helpful insights for anyone who is in contact with the dying and death.

In the previous chapters, the problem of death has been analyzed through different mediums pointing to the theme of the thesis: the fear of death is really our last enemy. The three chapters dealing with persons (Life Experience, The Dying, and Observers) point to this basic assumption that the last enemy is not death itself, but the fear of death. The final chapter deals with the Biblical and theological aspects of death, making the same point in different language. In a sense the other chapters validate the last chapter, and vice versa. Once the fear of death has been conquered, one is no longer afraid of death itself. In a very real sense, once the last enemy of God has been conquered, one is completely free. He is living in Christ, and Christ in him. This can be seen quite vividly from the following quote.

It was like nothing I had ever experienced before; I was neither in heaven or Hell (like a vacuum). There was a nothingness about the whole thing. Then, I gave myself over to God to do what he wanted. At that point something happened. It was like a re-birth. I was in heaven, and I was free of pain. I really did not care whether I had any or not. It was like being dead -- I suppose. Then there was life. A re-birth. This is the first time this has ever happened. When

I was younger I remember being baptized and joining the Church. I guess this is what it was like. When I look at different things, I see them differently than I ever have. I see them through faith.

Mrs. C. was in a wheelchair. She said she had much to be thankful for because she had been so ill. "I was very near death. In fact, there was a point when I thought I was dead and I kept hoping that someone would put a rose on my grave. Then, I woke up and someone was giving me something in my mouth. There was a time when I was neither conscious of death or life. I just remember being without feeling. And I feel now that I am living a new life. I no longer fear death as I did before. Oh, I was so afraid I would die and not be with my loved ones. They too were afraid of death as I was and they were afraid for me. Now, I am no longer afraid of death; it can come and it will not bother me. It is as if it will come and life will be the same as it is now." I mentioned the point St. Paul makes about defeating the last enemy, death, that she may have life, and her very close relatives have done the same thing. She felt so. "It is as if I am now living in heaven, and the wonderful thing is that all those bad things that I told you had been bothering me, well, I have forgotten them; I cannot even remember them."¹

One is finally forced to ask the question as to how this material in this thesis can be used by a minister. Is there anything in this thesis of sufficient worth to be used by a minister in crucial situations? A death situation is a most important time because of the nature of the event. Here there is life, and at the same time there is death. The Christian minister finds himself in the unique position

¹Interview at Lemuel Shattuck State Hospital, Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, by Rayford B. High, Jr., Chaplain's assistant, on November 2, 1965, and November 16, 1965, of Mrs. Edith Christianson.

of contributing to the life of the dying person as well as to the lives of those around the person. Of all other persons in this situation the minister is unique because he can affirm life out of a death situation. How does this happen?

The first task of a minister of Jesus Christ is to free the individual of all of the burdens which prevent him from facing death with his whole person. If there is evidence of a fear of death, it becomes important at that point to help this person work through his fear of death. This overcoming of the fear comes only in a sure faith, an unshakable trust in the minister. But, beyond this, the person overcomes these obstacles through the minister because of the whole life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Leading a person to a point of encounter with God, face to face, is really the most important thing a minister can do at this time. And in order to do this, a minister must be able to understand and accept his own death. In leading a person to this point of encounter, of self-understanding, the person is then free. This freedom comes when the person experiences the presence of the Holy Spirit actively at work in his life. And from this, the person knows there is another kind of help which is at his disposal. The individual no longer has to carry the burden of his life and death. If the minister is able to assist in leading the person to that point where he gives himself over to Jesus Christ, he has been the greatest help God has intended him to be.

From this whole process, the family can also receive the same benefits as the dying person if they are allowed to participate in the whole situation. If a minister is able to work with a family's anxiety about their dying relative sufficiently, they too can participate in this encounter of life and death, and ultimately, God. And since the staff has been present all of this time, they are exposed to what is going on and may be made more aware of this, if they are brought in.

The dying situation can be one of two experiences for the people involved: either death, or life affirmed. One immediately is faced with the problem, who is to do this affirming of life? The minister can do this. He can do this through the help and leading of the Holy Spirit. That means this minister must be open to where and how the Spirit will lead him in these life and death situations. This openness to the Spirit comes only through an openness in one's everyday life. This condition is in direct proportion to one's prayer life where one not only is constant communication with God, but also is constantly being given direction. What is being said here is simply that a great deal of what happens in these situations depends on the personal faith of the minister himself. For many people within the Christian Church, the minister is the earthly representative of our Lord Jesus Christ, and everything that the Son of God stands for on earth. This may be placing a minister in a very undesirable position, but in reality, when one becomes a

minister he does become the earthly representative of Jesus Christ, in as much as God intends him to be. So, when a minister enters a room of a dying person, he does represent something more than just another person of the hospital staff. His very presence in the room can be one of hope, trust, and strength. Through the personal faith of the minister, one is visited by the presence of God as far as God has intended this to occur in the form of another human being. And this statement is not to be understood in a very restricted sense. On the contrary, it is through others that we come in contact with God, experience His presence, and are won over to His way of life, living a life of faith.

In this sense, the personal faith of the minister as he enters each new situation is very akin to the knowledge and love of God each of us knows and spreads over the earth. If a minister is not able to communicate the underlying mystery of death to the persons present, then they will only know death as the last enemy, unconquered. If, on the other hand, the minister chooses to be bold and proclaim what the Gospel proclaims page after page, life can be affirmed from this process. In dying, once we come to grips with the really essential problem then this can be dealt with. The fear of death is the most horrifying part of death. Our Lord had to wrestle with this problem. From his struggle, he overcame this fear and affirmed life by his continuing life today.

The minister, through his knowledge and faith of our Lord's struggling, can pass this on to others by his participation in their struggles and sufferings. A minister may be of service to a dying person when he helps them to understand the total meaning to the Gospel account: once the last enemy has been defeated, there is life, affirmed and continuous. And in a sense, death can lead to joy if one is able to understand the Gospel of Jesus Christ in this light. This process can take place through the dying person's trust and faith in God as received and lived through this minister as the representative of Jesus Christ.

If those involved with death can understand and believe in this Christ-like experience, the living can be helped immensely in their grief. This can become a source of real joy and a positive affirmation of life emerges. In the last analysis, once we are able to face death and struggle with it in light of our Christian belief, we can emerge as those who have conquered God's last enemy: the fear of death.

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